Fairbury's Interesting 100 Year History Revealed

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Local Christian Church Starts In Year 1868

The Fairbury Christian Church had its beginning in the year 1868 with nine charter members: Namely, Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. John Adkins, Mr. and Mrs. Hotchkiss, Mrs. McCurdy, Mrs. Lizzie Spence and Mrs. DeFord. The Rev. J. B. McCorkle was the first to introduce this faith to Fairbury and organized the Church. The first place of meeting was a room over a wagon shop. Later a building was purchased from the Presbyterians and used for a time. It was in the year 1894, during the pastorate of the Rev. J. W. Porter that the present building, at First and Walnut, was dedicated. These were trying days and took a lot of faith as well as labor.

Miller Hotaling, father of P. M. Hotaling, very faithfully stood by the work of the Church for many years. Two of his daughters, Mrs. Edna Barnes and Mrs. Leola Ploense are still faithful to the cause. A son, the late Lewis R. Hotaling, was given to the Ministry.

The life of the Congregation ebbed and flowed. After various removals and discouragements and in 1880 there was a reorganization by the Rev. A. M. Markle.

Other very faithful workers in the early years, to name only a few, were Mr. and Mrs. Christian Amsler, Mr. and Mrs. George Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. James Besgrove, Mr. and Mrs. John Meek and daughter, Mrs. Janie Meek Compton; Mrs. Chloe Pulsipher and daughter, Mrs. Nettie Compton; Mrs. Viola Critchfield, Ed Dillon, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Dillon, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Vickery, Mr. and Mrs. M. N. Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Roland Wood, V. L. Dally, Mr. and Mrs. James Ross, who gave their two sons, Rev. C. M. Ross and Dr. Roy Ross, to the Ministry. There were many others who were faithful workers in Church, Bible School, Christian Endeavor and Ladies Aid Society that can not be mentioned here.

Church membership in 1914 numbered 163 with a Sunday School enrollment of 80. At the present time the membership is less than half this number. Many are deceased, a few moved away and some went to seek employment elsewhere.

Ministers came and went. Among those on record as holding the longest time pastorates was the Rev. W. C. Chapman who spent twelve years on the field, living in the house next to the Church now occupied by Mrs. Herbert Sutton. Rev. Chapman left Fairbury in 1928. In 1945 he observed his 50th anniversary in the ministry. In honor of the occasion the Church at Harrisville, New York, where he had been pastor for several years gave him a surprise dinner and program. His only son, Wilbur Chapman, had the honor of being the youngest S. S. Superintendent ever elected to the Fairbury Church after his first year in high school. He graduated from Eureka Bible College and while working for his degree in Chicago filled the pulpit in Fairbury for a year. He was pastor at a church in New York State when last

heard from.

The Fairbury Church had the late Rev. Charles D. Hougham, of Bloomington, for an eight year pastorate beginning Aug. 17, 1930 and ending in August 1938. Three very successful revivals were held during the time.

The Church has done a missionary work for a number of years by giving Bible students a start in the ministry. Other than Chapman were the Rev. Wilbur Rolan now in Southern Illinois; Rev. Arthur Wayne Braden, Jr. who served as Chaplain in World War II and now at the Midway, Ky. Church; Rev. Kendrick Anderson, pastor in Lexington, Ky.; Rev. Kenneth Coy who was ordained in the Fairbury Church and now pastor in Cincinnati, Ohio; Rev. John Patterson ordained at the Coleta, Ill., church; Rev. Luther Perrine, in Peoria and Rev. Richard Neal at Gayes, Ill. The Rev. Jesse E. Caudill, of Bloomington, is at present supply minister.

Long time members of the Christian Church who are still active in the church are Mrs. Fannie Besgrove Nieswander who was baptised Sept. 13, 1896 by the Rev. J. W. Porter; Mrs. Anna Besgrove Brown, Mrs. Edna Hotaling Barnes, Mrs. Hazel Johnson Merrill and Mrs. Leola Hotaling Ploense who came into the fellowship in the very early years of 1900. The Church recently received two lovely gifts from former workers. The first a nice pulpit Bible from Mrs. Dora Jones Orze of Clearwater, Florida, in memory of her parents and twin brother, Mr. and Mrs. M. N. Jones and Don. The second gift was new collection plates donated by Mrs. Bertha Scherr Bowker, of Manteno, Ill.

Within the past few years much improvement inside the building has been financed by the two Women's Sunday School classes and during the summer the men of the Church painted the outside of the church building.

Few in number tho' we be,
May God direct our way;
Open our eyes that we may see,
The Glory of Him each day.

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